



STATE OF ARIZONA

JANICE K. BREWER
GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

April 3, 2013

The Honorable Ken Bennett
Secretary of State
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

RE: House Bill 2476 (schools; isolation rooms; restrictions)

Dear Secretary Bennett,

Today, I signed into law House Bill 2476 (schools; isolation rooms; restrictions). This legislation establishes guidelines for schools to notify parents and seek consent prior to consigning a student to a so-called isolation room. I view this measure as a starting point as the State reviews the practice of these isolation rooms and any necessary steps we can take to ensure they are not misused.

I am grateful to the bill sponsor – Representative Kelly Townsend, R-District 16 – for shining a light on this issue. It is chilling to imagine an Arizona schoolchild being shut away in a padded room, no larger than a closet, for hours on end. There has to be a better way.

During legislative hearings, we learned that Arizona is one of only six states with no regulation governing the use of isolation rooms in schools. It is critical that we learn more about this issue, as well as the best management techniques used in other states to properly manage an out-of-control student who may be a threat to him or herself, classmates or teachers. Over the interim, I ask that Representative Townsend work with stakeholders – including parents and behavioral-health experts – to address some of these issues so that legislators can revisit this issue next year with additional steps the State of Arizona can take.

Our goal must be to ensure Arizona children – especially those with special needs – are treated in a way that provides for both their safety and dignity. Working together, I know we can achieve this.

Sincerely,

Janice K. Brewer
Governor

Cc: The Honorable Andy Tobin
The Honorable Andy Biggs
The Honorable Kelly Townsend